Alberta

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Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

2011 - 2012 Annual Report

Government of Alberta

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

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Message from the Chair

Honourable Stephen Khan
Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education
324 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Khan:

On behalf of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) please find enclosed ACAT's Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2012.

It has been an exciting year for ACAT with the addition of Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, and Yukon College as Alberta Transfer System members. We were also pleased to welcome Dr. William Connor, Dr. Christine Johns, Mr. James D'Arcy and Mr. Jim Gibbons to Council. Their collective knowledge and understanding of Alberta's post-secondary system has been a tremendous asset to ACAT.

In October 2011, a Learner Pathways sub-committee was struck to continue work on block transfer and learning outcomes. Together with its 39 member institutions, ACAT continues to remain committed to develop and broaden learner pathways.

Articulation committees bring program heads, faculty, and Alberta Education, in a given area of study, together to exchange information and discuss issues related to admissions and transfer. This year, ACAT initiated the articulation committees in the areas of Business Administration and Child and Youth Care. Plans are also in place to expand into Psychology and Sociology in the upcoming year.

In December 2011, an ACAT task group initiated a review of the Alberta Transfer System membership and admission policy. The sub-committee's recommendations were tabled at Council's February 2012 meeting and it was agreed further research was required before making changes to the policy. This item will be discussed at future meetings

ACAT remains strongly committed to the importance of collaboration both provincially and nationally. In February 2012, Council approved the Instructor Qualifications Best Practices Document developed by Council and system stakeholders. At the national level, ACAT continues to participate on the Western Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer as well as the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer.

Council has also had the pleasure to meet with a number of Alberta Transfer System member institutions over the past year. These visits are important to help inform Council's work and priorities and provide an opportunity for members to discuss their challenges and successes.

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to recognize the contribution of all Alberta Transfer System member institutions as we work together to enhance student access and mobility. I would also like to thank the ministry for the support provided by the ACAT Secretariat and the department.

Sincerely,

Ron Woodward
Chair

Introduction

Established in 1974, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is an advisory agency accountable to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology and, in support of Campus Alberta, responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding post-secondary admission and transfer policy.

ACAT works with its stakeholders for the benefit of learners to ensure smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and post-secondary to post-secondary.

Vision

Alberta's post-secondary institutions work cooperatively to provide a transfer system that is responsive to the needs of learners in the matters of admissions, transfer credit, and recognition of prior learning.

Mission

The mission of ACAT is to be a catalyst for beneficial change and an advocate for learners in the areas of post-secondary admission and transfer throughout Campus Alberta. ACAT provides leadership and direction, as a cornerstone of Campus Alberta, in the improvement of educational opportunities for Alberta students through inter-institutional transfer. ACAT is committed to supporting and improving communication among Alberta post-secondary institutions and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, with all that this means for educational planning for the benefit of learners.

Operating Principles

The Council endorses the following as basic to its purpose and activities:

(a) Support Campus Alberta's core objectives by facilitating learners to successfully navigate the Transfer System and foster lifelong learning in the advanced education system.

(b) Student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility among institutions of higher education in Alberta shall be optimized.

(c) Negotiation of opportunities for student mobility shall be based on the recognition that while learning experiences may differ in a variety of ways, their substance may be virtually equivalent in terms of learning outcomes and rigour.

(d) Effective academic advising, career counseling and optimum mobility require that the student have prior knowledge of at least the minimum transfer credit which can be awarded.

(e) Individual institutions have the primary responsibility for instructional programs, even though responsibility for higher education is shared among various constituents. The responsibility of institutions includes program design and delivery, determination of academic prerequisites and student admission criteria, and certification of the academic achievement of students.

(f) Institutions have the responsibility and the prerogative to investigate the total educational background of applicants seeking admission.

(g) Post-secondary institutions are committed to developing and maintaining clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer credit and to applying them in a consistent manner.

(h) After students are granted admission to an institution under a transfer arrangement, they shall be granted the same rights and privileges as students who began their studies at the institution.

Goals and Strategies

In 2011, ACAT identified admission, transfer, communication and influence as its core business. The following goals and associated strategies were identified in its 2011 – 2014 Business Plan to support Council's core business.

Admission

Goal 1

Facilitate the development, maintenance and communication of fair and equitable admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions.

Priority Initiatives

- Promote smooth transitions as students move from high school to post-secondary programs and from one post-secondary program to another.
- Promote increased access to clear information on admission practices at post-secondary institutions.
- Encourage post-secondary institutions to clearly communicate their admission practices.
- Encourage post-secondary institutions to develop, where possible, common terminology.
- Work with Alberta Education to ensure that new high school curriculum information is available to learners.

Transfer

Goal 2

Learners receive appropriate educational credit as they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Priority Initiatives

- Develop and enhance system-wide principles, policies, and procedures to continuously improve the student transfer system.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the transfer system.
- Ensure the continuing accuracy of transfer agreements.
- Continue the implementation of Alberta Advanced Education and Technology's PLAR Action Plan.

Communication

Goal 3

Learners have access to current, accurate information on admissions and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities and are aware of the benefits of the admission and transfer system.

Priority Initiatives

- Provide information to support admission of high school students, students transferring between Alberta institutions and from other jurisdictions so they can make informed decisions as they plan their studies.
- Educate students and other stakeholders about the benefits of the Alberta Transfer System.

Influence

Goal 4

ACAT is the cornerstone of Campus Alberta and is the recognized leader on issues related to the admissions and transfer system in Alberta, while serving as a model for other jurisdictions.

Priority Initiatives

- Position ACAT to be a leader in furthering the Campus Alberta vision.
- Conduct research and provide policy advice to Advanced Education and Technology and the advanced education system on items related to admissions and transfer.
- Provide a forum for open and informed inter-institutional discussion of admissions and transfer issues.
- Advocate for the provincial transfer system nationally and work to enhance national/provincial connections.

Results

Council has made a number of accomplishments in support of its core business over and above the ongoing day-to-day operational requirements performed by the ACAT Secretariat. The following bullets highlight Council's key activities.

- Initiated review of terminology to ensure common language and definitions within Alberta Transfer System documents.
- Developed the Instructor Qualifications Best Practices Document to assist those involved in the Alberta Transfer System with overcoming challenges related to instructor qualifications.
- Provided member in good standing letters to Alberta Transfer System members recognizing their contribution to the system and noting opportunities for improvement.
- Participated in the Minister's Summit on Learner Pathways. The Summit brought together stakeholders from across Campus Alberta to share perspectives on admission and transfer.
- Delivered presentations on the Alberta Transfer System and role of ACAT to student groups including the Council of Alberta University Students and the Alberta Students' Executive Council.
- Approved Alberta Transfer System membership applications submitted by the Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute, and Yukon College. The Alberta Transfer System now consists of 39 members and Yukon College is the fourth out of province member.
- Participated in the annual Contact Persons' meeting. Outcomes from the meeting are used by the ACAT Secretariat to identify enhancements for systems used by the Contact Persons and Assistants.
- Advocated for enhancement to the Transfer Agreement and Archival Retrieval System. The current software is outdated and difficult to adapt to changing business needs.
- Participated in seven site visits to discuss issues, opportunities and successes with member institutions. Institutions included Olds College, The Kings University College, Yellowhead Tribal College, DeVry Institute of Technology - Calgary, Ambrose College, Portage College, and Aurora College.
- Initiated a review of the Alberta Transfer System membership and admission policy. It was agreed that further research was required before making changes to the policy.
- Formed a Learner Pathways sub-committee to continue work on block transfer and learning outcomes.
- Initiated articulation committees in the areas of Business Administration and Child and Youth Care. Plans are also in place to expand into Psychology and Sociology in the upcoming year. Research is currently underway to base future articulation committee expansion on student mobility and transfer agreement data.
- Advocated for the enhancement of student access and mobility on the national level through participation on Western Consortium on Admissions and Transfer and the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer.

Members of the Council

Mr. Ron Woodward
Chair, Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Mr. Larry Hlushak
Public Member

Mr. Jim Gibbons
Public Member

Dr. Robert Boudreau
Vice Provost & Associate Vice President, Academic
The University of Lethbridge

Dr. William (Bill) Connor
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs and Instruction
University of Alberta

Mr. James D'Arcy
Registrar
Athabasca University

Dr. Christine Johns
Director, Academic Strategies
University of Calgary

Dr. Robin Fisher
Provost & Vice-President, Academic
Mount Royal University

Dr. Paula Burns
Provost & Vice President Academic
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

Dr. Tracy Edwards
President and CEO
Lethbridge College

Ms. Alice Wainwright-Stewart
Vice-President, Academic, Innovation and Research
Lakeland College

Ms. Anna Kae Todd
Vice-President, Learning Services
Bow Valley College

Dr. Jonathan Strand
Associate Vice President Academic & Dean of
Undergraduate Studies
Concordia University College of Alberta

Mr. David Aldrich
Vice President of Student Experience and Admissions
Alberta College of Art and Design

Mr. Vincent Steinhauer
Faculty Member
Blue Quills First Nations College

Mr. Alastair MacKinnon
Council of Alberta University Students

Ms. Tessa Cocchio
Alberta Students Executive Council

Ms. Merla Bolender
Executive Director
Alberta Education

Ms. Christine Savage
Director
Advanced Education and Technology

Mr. Kevin Shufflebotham
Senior Manager
Advanced Education and Technology